



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**EXAMINING GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BABY
BOOMERS' AND GENERATION X'S WORK ATTITUDES OF
AUTHENTICITY, BALANCE AND CHALLENGE:
A CASE STUDY OF LECTURERS IN A
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC INSTITUTE
OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

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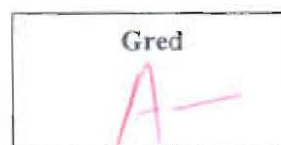
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ABSTRACT

EXAMINING GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BABY BOOMERS' AND GENERATION XS' WORK ATTITUDES OF AUTHENTICITY, BALANCE AND CHALLENGE: A CASE OF LECTURERS IN A MALAYSIAN PUBLIC INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Farrah NoorNajwa Bt Mohamad Alfasni

This study aims to identify the generational differences between Baby Boomers and Generation Xs' work attitudes by using the Kaleidoscope Career Model in the dimensions of authenticity, balance and challenge among lecturers in a Malaysian Public Institute of Higher Education. A quantitative descriptive research was adopted and used as a tool to collect the data. The instrument used was the self-administered questionnaire that was adopted from the previous researchers. Prior to the actual data, the validated questionnaires were then distributed to the actual respondents which were the lecturers in the entire faculty in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak and Universiti Teknologi Mara. The sample of this study was 270. To answer the first research question, the researcher used Pearson and spearman correlation. The analysis of mann-whitney u-test and independent samples t-test was performing to compare the means of Baby Boomers and Generation Xs by using the software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 17.0 version. A significance difference was found in the comparison of Baby Boomers and Generation Xs in perceiving their own needs of authenticity and balance in work attitude. But it was that there was no significance difference in the comparison of Baby Boomers and Generation Xs in perceiving their own needs of challenge in work attitude.

ABSTRAK

MENGENALPASTI PERBEZAAN ANTARA GENERASI BABY BOOMER DAN GENERASI X BERKAITAN SIKAP KERJA DARI DIMENSI KEASLIAN, KESEIMBANGAN DAN CABARAN: KAJIAN MENGENAI PENSYARAH DI PUSAT PENGAJIAN TINGGI AWAM DI MALAYSIA

Farrah NoorNajwa Bt Mohamad Alfasni

Penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti perbezaan generasi antara Baby Boomer dan Generasi X dengan menggunakan Model Kerjaya Kaleidoskop dalam dimensi keaslian, keseimbangan dan cabaran diantara pensyarah di Intitut Pengajian Tinggi Awam di Malaysia. Sebuah kajian deskriptif kuantitatif diadaptasikan dan digunakan sebagai medium untuk mengumpul data. Medium yang digunakan adalah self-administered questionnaire yang diadaptasikan dari pengkaji yang sebelumnya. Bagi data sebenar, soalan kajian kemudian diagihkan kepada respondent iaitu pensyarah di seluruh fakulti di Universiti Malaysia Sarawak dan Universiti Teknologi Mara. Sample kajian ini adalah sebanyak 270. Untuk menjawab soalan kajian yang pertama, penyelidik menggunakan Korelasi Pearson dan Korelasi Spearman. Analisis Mann-Whitney U-test dan Independent Sample T-test digunakan untuk membandingkan sikap kerja diantara Generasi Baby Boomer dan Generasi X dengan menggunakan Software Statistical Package Sosial (SPSS) versi 17.0. Satu perbezaan yang signifikan ditemui pada perbandingan Generasi Baby Boomer dan Generasi X dalam keaslian dan keseimbangan dalam sikap kerja. Namun tiada perbezaan yang signifikan dikenalpasti diantara Baby Boomers dan Generasi X dalam cabaran dalam keperluan sikap kerja mereka.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the background of the study, statement of problem, general and specific objectives, the conceptual framework used and the significance of the study. This chapter also gives more details about the limitations and the scope of this study for theoretical and contributions. The definitions of terms are also covered to give clear information and deepen the understanding of readers in this research.

1.1 Background of study

Current career patterns are still influenced by the traditional career model, which limit many women and force them to adapt to this model. The result of such approach is the unequal access of women towards development of their career when compared to men. This has its implications in persistence of the sectoral and occupational separation.

Much has been written in the popular press about the clash between Baby Boomers and members of Generation X. For instance, *Business Week* has featured stories such as "The reasons why Generation X are unhappy at work," which suggests that Boomer managers do not understand what motivates their Generation X employees (Erickson, 2005). *Fortune* has reported on how Generation X feel cannot get ahead because of the "grey ceiling" created by Boomers who will not retire (Fisher and Bonamici, 2006). *Time* magazine featured a cover story about Generation X that lamented "they just won't up" (Grossman, L., 2005) while illustrating also that the generation gap is not just a western phenomenon with its story on "China's me generation" (Simon, 2007). Society for Human Resource Management in the year of 2004 stated that similar reports of how the generation gap between Baby Boomers and Generation X has caused increased workplace conflict.

There is a potential difference in the career needs of Baby Boomers and Generation X, the two generations that dominate today's western workplace (Sullivan, 1999). It has been suggested that the root of the conflicts between Baby Boomers and Generation X is that these two generations differed in their attitudes towards work-non-work balance, the desire for challenging work, and differences in the meaning of work (Callanan and Greenhaus, 2008; Hankin, 2004). Baby Boomers are often viewed as workaholics who thrive on increasing work challenge whereby Generation X are seen as placing a higher value on balance to the point of being perceived as slackers. While popular press has devoted considerable attention to how the interaction of members from these different

generations may have important implications for current workplace dynamics and practices (Zemke et al., 2000).

1.2 Problem statement

Today, the workforce is dominated by two generations which are the Baby Boomers born between 1945 and 1964 and the Generation X born between year 1965 and 1979 (Loomis, 2000). A third generation is entering the workforce, Generation Y or the Internet Generation, the eldest of whom just turned 26.

For many, managing an emerging work force containing retiring Boomers, Generation X, and newly entering Generation Y will be a challenge. About 76 million Americans were born between 1946 and 1964 (Rakoff, 2001). In 2010, the youngest of Baby Boomers is 27 and the oldest 45 years old. By their sheer size, these Baby Boomers defined and redefined work for the last quarter of the 20th century (Joyner, 2000). As the oldest Baby Boomers retire, it affects the diversity of the labour force, overall economy, certain occupations and industries. This has a direct impact on the economy's capacity to produce goods and services. Understanding more fully what traits or behaviours seem to be associated with how each baby boomers and Generation X perceives effective leadership will only be beneficial easing the transition as one group leaves and the other replaces it (Miller, 2005)

The work characteristics of Baby Boomers and Generation X are different in many respects, and this difference can be explained by many factors such as the differences in living environments when the values of these generations were formed. The most consistent finding in the literature when comparisons of work characteristics are made between Generation X and Baby Boomers is that each generational group exhibits a different mixture of lifestyle values and work ethics. The Baby Boomers tend to work hard and are generally loyal to their employer. In contrast, work values for the Generation X emphasise personal satisfaction rather than just working hard.

Beside their work values, Shu (1998) indicated that Generation X has broken the traditional Maslow hierarchy needs rule and challenged individual development progress. Baby Boomers have tended to follow their individual development progress starting from education, career, marriage, promotion and this has moved them towards self-achievement. Generation X squeezes the process together. They need self achievement from their job and basic needs at the same time and they do not want their work to impact negatively on their quality of life. Baby Boomers have had to work in all three phases of a progressive economy and therefore have had to adapt from being predominantly industrial workers that is undertaking predominantly industrial work, to service workers and now to knowledge workers. On the other hand, Generation X entered the workforce around 1985 assuming that they commenced employment in their late teens and have only ever experienced a predominantly service economy with training programs during their careers oriented to deliver the skills.

The big worry here is, Erickson (2005) stated that most of Generation X were unhappy at work because of their Boomer managers do not understand what motivates their Generation X employees. Generation X also felt that they cannot get ahead because of the “grey ceiling” created by Boomer who will not retire (Fisher and Bonamici, 2006). Employers have been unable to determine whether generational membership directly impacts career motivation and career decisions. So, it is crucial to study the differences of Baby Boomer and Generation X’s work attitude for Human Resource Person in order to understand their behaviour and avoid conflict in each and every organisation.

This lack of understanding has presented some challenges for business leaders to meet the needs of a multigenerational workforce. Therefore, the problem is that while continued generational diversity is obvious in workforce, there is insufficient knowledge about differences in career motivation and work attitude between the cohorts. Addressing this problem may increase organizational leaders’ generational competence as they formulate recruitment and retention strategies that support generation differences. As the previous study was

conducted in western country, the result may indicate whether Malaysia have similar situation compare to the western country. Malaysia is a developing country which may face the similar issues that happen in western country. Thus, this study shows how the development of different country may affect the generational differences of work attitude by using kaleidoscope career model as the indicator. Also this study will indicate whether the existence of generational differences in Malaysia as similar to previous research that was conducted in western country.

1.3 Research Questions

1. Is there any difference in Baby Boomer and Generation X's work attitude?
2. Do Baby Boomers generation and Generation X differ in their needs for authenticity, balance, and challenge?

1.4 Objectives of the study

1.4.1 General objective

Generally, this study is done to examine generational differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X in work attitudes by using Kaleidoscope Career Model underlying authenticity, balance and challenge.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

1. To identify the differences between Baby Boomer and Generation X's need for authenticity
2. To identify the differences between of Baby Boomer and Generation X's need for balance
3. To identify the differences between of Baby Boomer and Generation X's need for challenge

1.5 Conceptual Framework

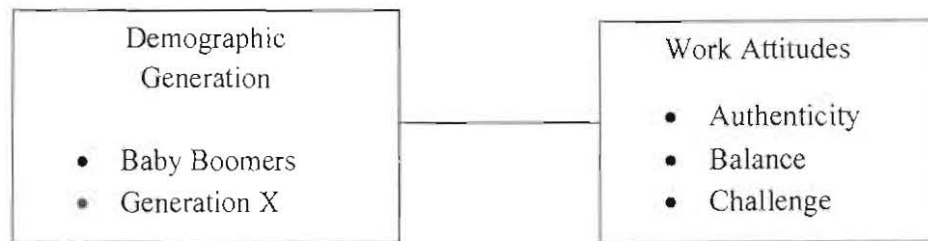


Figure 1.0: The direct effect relationships between selective demographic factors towards perceived on their own working attitude

This direct effect model illustrates that the demographic factors are assessed in three main sub-dimensions. All dimensions that have been accepted as the elements of working attitude are authenticity, balance and challenge. Whereby, demographic factors are Baby Boomer who was born in 1945 until 1964 and Generation X who was born in 1965 until 1985 influenced the perceived of their own working attitude. The researcher chose this characteristic as the conceptual framework as a guideline for this study.

1.6 Hypothesis

Hypotheses for this study are:

Ha1: There is a difference between Baby Boomers and Generation Xs need for authenticity

Ha2: There is a difference between Baby Boomers and Generation Xs need for balance

Ha3: There is a difference between Baby Boomers and Generation Xs need for challenge

1.7 Definition of term

1.7.1 Work Attitude

1.7.1.1 Authenticity

According to Mainiero & Sullivan (2000), authenticity is the parameter to measure the work attitude of the workers in identifying the individual's internal values whether it is align with his or her external behaviours and the values of the employing organization. Authenticity is referring to the quality of being real and true. According to Bilimoria (2005), women posit that issues of authenticity and being true to oneself will be paramount in late career. Authenticity also can be defined as the quality or condition of being trustworthy or genuine. For example, the employees who are frustrated in their attempts to express their authenticity may experience the negative work outcomes such as reducing their job satisfaction and commitment. Some workers choose to pick out later in their lives to pursue long-forgotten dreams which are their need for authenticity may not be met. Thus, they are making a career transition in order to find more meaning in their lives and re-establish their need in authenticity.

1.7.1.2 Balance

According to Mainiero and Sullivan (2009), balance refers to the individual's strives to reach an equilibrium between work and non-work such as family, friends, elderly relatives and personal interest. Most of the organisations do not offer a culture or the resources necessary for working women to balance all of her responsibilities (Baruch & Sullivan, 2006). According to Bilimoria (2005), women posit that issues of balance between career and relational concerns will more likely manifest in mid career. Balance is a state where things are of equal weight or force means in a position where you will stand without falling to either side, or to put something in this position. For example, to balance the workers need for balance, the organization policies need to be created to allowing for on

and off ramps for those seeking to devote time to child rearing and caring for family members while still remaining connected to the organization.

1.7.1.3 Challenge

According to Mainiero and Sullivan (2009), challenge defines as the individual's need for stimulating work such as responsibility and autonomy as well as career advancement. According to Bilimoria (2005), women engaging in challenging work will be the primary focus of women in early career phases. Challenge is something needing great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully and which therefore tests a person's ability. For example, by holding the senior managers responsible for the achievement of current goals, the organizations are likely can fulfil the worker's need for challenge.

1.8 Significance of study

1.8.1 Theoretical contribution

This study contributes to the previous literature on work attitudes of Baby Boomers and Generation X, which mostly conducted in various western countries in the context of Malaysian employees. It is also contributes to the validity of Kaleidoscope Career Model in the context of Malaysian workers as previous studied done in overseas. With the research obtained, it hoped that this research served a greater purpose to strengthen early theories and models.

1.8.2 Robustness of Research Methodology

This research will conduct a quantitative research to deeper explore into the generational differences in work attitudes. This study hopes that the findings of this study enable to assist the organizations in decision making situation by improving the understanding of working attitude of Baby Boomers and Generation X so that the conflict in organization can be avoided and increasing